

Hancock Forest Management Access Road Proposal

Happy Camp/Oak Knoll Ranger District, Klamath National Forest

Background

The Happy Camp/Oak Knoll Ranger District proposes the Hancock Forest Management Access Road Project to approve access across national forest system to the east side of a section (one square mile) of private land owned by AP Timber LLC and managed by Hancock Forest Management. Once access is approved, a right-of-way would be authorized by issuance of a Special Use Permit to the landowner (or designee). This proposal encompasses approximately three acres of a proposed right of way on national forest system.

The section of private land to be accessed by this proposal is located in Township 40 South, Range 1 East, Section 28, Willamette Meridian, in Jackson County. The proposed access route across NFS lands is located in the adjacent section, Section 27. The project is located within Cottonwood Creek fifth-field watershed, specifically, the Mill Creek subwatershed, that is tributary to the Klamath River downstream of Iron Canyon reservoir. The project is about 9 miles south of Ashland, OR and about 1.5 miles south east of Mt. Ashland in Jackson County, Oregon. Vicinity and project maps (Figures 1 and 2) are enclosed. The elevation of the proposed right of way is approximately 5,400 feet above mean sea level.

Management Direction

The 1995 Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended (Forest Plan) provides forest-wide and management area direction for permits and projects that occur on the Klamath National Forest. The proposed project lies within the general forest lands¹ in Management Area 15, Partial Retention.

Forest-wide Standard and Guidelines for Special Uses 17-6 (Forest Plan page 4-40) provides primary management direction for this project:

Limit special uses, including utility corridors and transportation rights-of-way, to those that cannot be reasonably located on private land and that do not conflict with management area objectives. If additional utility corridors and transportation rights-of-way are needed, they shall be designed to minimize the density of these corridors. Opportunities to participate in cost-sharing agreements with private landowners should be explored for transportation rights-of-way.

Management direction for this area is further defined by Management Area 15, (MA-15) Partial Retention because the area where the proposed access route lies could be seen from Forest Road 20 between Hilt and Mount Ashland a sensitivity level 1 travel route. Although there are not specific standards and guidelines for special use permits in areas that have a visual quality objective the land and resource management plan (4-126) states that:

Areas managed to meet a Partial Retention visual quality objective may show evidence of management activities but are visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape in form, line, color, or texture of landscape elements. Views from visually important roads and trails appear forested and provide a nearly natural looking landscape.

¹ General forest lands are “regulated” to provide a sustainable yield of timber products and are included in the timber base of the forest. Partial Retention lands are considered as “Timber Management – Modified Yield Objectives” in the calculation of timber outputs and are thus “regulated” lands. See Appendix B, page B-4 of the FEIS for the KNF LRMP.

Initial screening by the interdisciplinary team and Forest staff found that there was no existing reasonable access to the east side of the private parcel in Section 28, and that approval of the proposed right of way would not conflict with the Forest Plan. The proposed access is the shortest possible route.

In addition to Forest Plan direction, the interdisciplinary team considered guidance for special use permits and applicable law, regulation and policy for access to private inholdings surrounded by national forest system lands. The Forest Service is required by law to provide reasonable access to private inholdings surrounded by national forest system lands, however the access must be approved and authorized by permit prior to use.

Purpose and Need for Action

There is a need to approve access across national forest system lands to Township 40 South, Range 1 East, Section 28, Willamette Meridian, Jackson County, Oregon so that the owner the land, AP Timber, LLC and its agent Hancock Forest Management can legally access, use and manage this private parcel. Section 28 is a private inholding surrounded by national forest system lands.

Existing Condition

The AP Timber LLC owns 640 acres (one section of land) in Township 40 South, Range 1 East, Section 28, Willamette Meridian. Existing roads do not provide reasonable access to the east half of section 28.

Desired Condition

Reasonable access exists to the east side of Section 28 so that AP Timber LLC and its agents can use and manage their property.

Proposed Action

The proposed action was designed to meet the purpose and need of the project. The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service), Klamath National Forest proposes to approve access and issue a special use permit to AP Timber LLC (or its designee) the landowner and project proponent, that would authorize reconstruction and use of 0.44 miles of existing non-system ridgetop road and construction and use of 0.05 miles of new road from the terminus of the existing road to the eastern boundary of the private parcel. Actions required to open the existing road and construct a new road segment would occur on about 3 acres of national forest system lands and include clearing small trees and brush, grading, vehicular access (e.g., logging trucks) and periodic maintenance of this non-system road consistent with the terms and conditions authorized under a special use permit. Approximately 34 conifers with average diameter of 13 inches and an average height of 36 feet would need to be cut to provide access. In addition, the project proponent has proposed to install a gate and perform maintenance of several road drainage structures on forest service road 40S11; this encompasses about 2 acres associated with the existing road prism.

Access

Access for this project will be mainly accomplished by use of roads on the national forest transportation system on forest road 40S11.

Figure 1 shows the general location of the Project. Figure 2 shows the location of the proposed action

Figure 1: General Location of the Project.

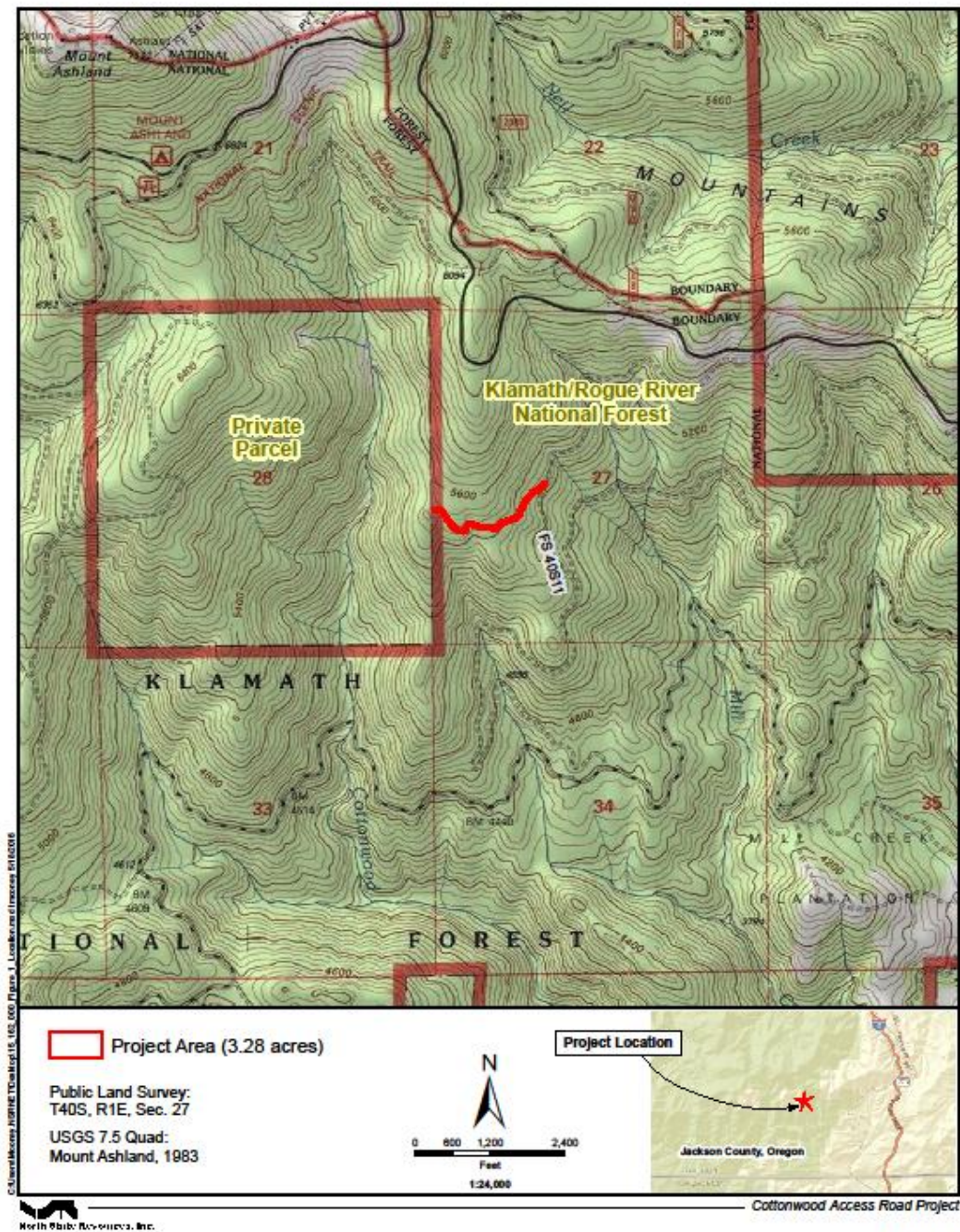


Figure 1
Project Location and Vicinity

Figure 2: Location of the Proposed Action.

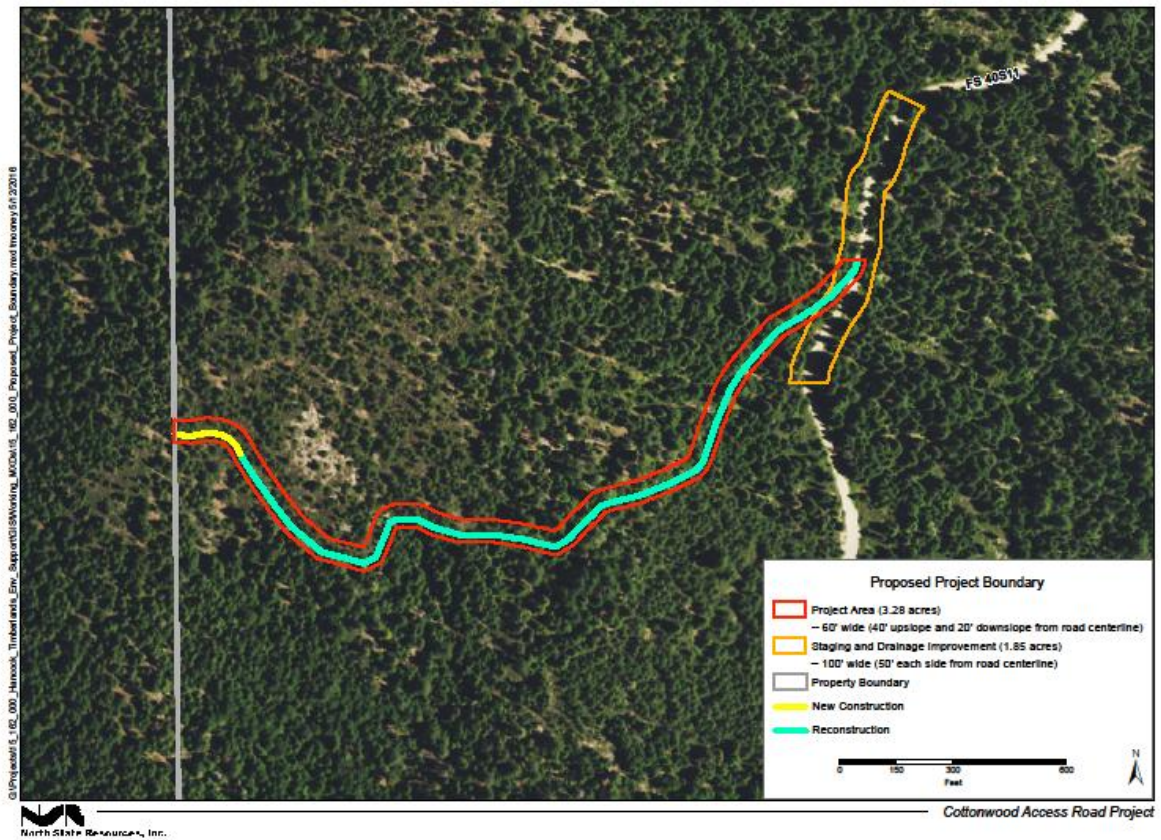


Figure 2: The proposed action would approve access that requires reconstruction and use of 0.44 miles of existing ridgetop road and construction and use of 0.05 miles of new road from the terminus of the existing road to the Hancock property boundary.